

Visions and New Beginnings

150 Years of the Vienna World's Fair

Reimagine the World

In 2023, Vienna will celebrate "150 Years of the Vienna World's Fair" An anniversary that is all about a special spirit: Vienna reinvented itself in the years around 1873. No other major event had a bigger impact on Vienna's development into a global city. And similar portents are evident in the city today. Since the 2000s, Vienna has been developing the same sort of speed it did in the late 19th century. Which is why Vienna will celebrate its past, present, and future in 2023 in the spirit of great urban visions. Because Vienna has always had the courage to reinvent the future.

Why is the time around 1873 still so incredibly important for Vienna today? It was in those years that Vienna became a global city. And at the time, stakes were driven in that are still essential to Vienna's high quality of life. The first Viennese high-source pipeline with its crystal-clear spring water was installed. New train stations and railway lines turned Vienna into a central European railway hub at a stroke. The World's Fair also meant the birth of modern city tourism. A large number of hotels, like the legendary Hotel Imperial, were built, but also coffee house institutions like Café Landtmann. It was also the founding phase of many museums and collections, which have since become world-famous. For example, the MAK – Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna, and the first models for the Kunsthistorisches Museum Vienna (KHM) were also presented at the World's Fair. And with the Vienna Woods rescued from being cut down, Austria's first environmental campaign took place at the gates to Vienna. Everything was about new beginnings.

Urban high points for Vienna

Because the period around 1873 was a high point of intellectualism, of the mind, and of education. In this historic phase, Vienna took on a new identity on an urban development and intellectual level. The Ringstrasse boulevard took shape. Vienna's path to becoming an important city of the industrial age was laid. At the time, Vienna was the fourth-largest city in the world. The World's Fair marked a high point in urban development. Vienna still benefits from this.

Vienna is booming like in olden days

Exactly 150 years later, Vienna is under similar portents. Vienna has been booming since the 2000s and developing at a similar pace that was last seen at the time of the World's Fair. Vienna's hotel industry is flourishing. All major train stations were renewed in the 2010s. Today, Vienna is the continent's most important night train hub, which makes environmentally friendly arrival and departure easy. Vienna's subway system is also growing and growing. In the Vienna of the third millennium, people think in categories of the future: Vienna is home to one of Europe's largest urban development areas – Seestadt Aspern. Vienna has a leading role in the area of congresses and meetings of every kind, especially in the field of medicine. Not to mention being a place for education and home to a number of universities. Vienna also stands out in the life sciences sector nowadays. And above all, Vienna glitters in its most prominent role as a hotspot for art, culture, music, and events. In 2023, it will all become clear: Vienna is making big strides and thrills visitors from around the world. Because the most recent developments are extremely important for the future of the city. What happens in Vienna today will still be hugely relevant 150 years

from now. All of which will be celebrated in grand style in 2023. And there's are plenty of reasons to come to Vienna to be inspired by the spirit of the 1873 World's Fair and by contemporary Vienna.

All of Vienna in the spirit of the World's Fair

An initial high point is on the program in the Prater in spring 2023: A new exhibition venue of the special kind, which is reminiscent of the legendary rotunda, opens with "Panorama Vienna". The rotunda was the architectural symbol of the World's Fair and the world's largest domed structure at the time, although it was destroyed by fire in 1937. The exhibition building of "Panorama Vienna" will be 34 meters high; within it, art and images will be shown whose size and dimensions can only be experienced in the form of a panorama.

The Museum of Technology (TMW) presents the special exhibition "Women At Work. 150th Anniversary of the First Women's Pavilion at the Vienna World's Fair" (May 2 to end of June 2023). There will also be special program on the World's Fair at the Weltmuseum Wien (World Museum Vienna), where a separate space has been dedicated to the World's Fair of 1873 for many years. Right on time for the 150th anniversary, the MAK – Museum of Applied Arts, Vienna, has two exhibitions on its program that make reference to 1873: One will be about the trend towards Orientalism, which was triggered by the Vienna World's Fair. The other is a special exhibition with which the MAK celebrates J. & L. Lobmeyr, one of the most traditional of Viennese companies. The renowned manufacturer of crystal glass took part in the World's Fair in 1873. Lobmeyr celebrates its 200th anniversary in 2023. In very general terms, 2023 is all about special handicrafts and designs from Vienna.

Exquisite handicrafts and design

For example, the jewelers A. E. Köchert also participated in the World's Fair in 1873. The company attained international fame, mainly for creating the star jewelry that Empress Sisi wore in her hair. A. E. Köchert still offer their refined assortment in the historic business premises on Neuer Markt, which the company founded in 1814 moved into on the occasion of the World's Fair in 1873. The internationally renowned Viennese maker of bespoke shoes, Scheer, also participated in the World's Fair and remains successful to this day. Just like the piano maker Bösendorfer, the luxury clockmaker Carl Suchy, and the silversmiths Jarosinski & Vaugoin. Handicrafts and design are only one area of many on which the World's Fair left behind visible marks.

Flourishing of the hotel sector and music

The World's Fair 1873 unleashed a spirit of optimism never before experienced in the hotel sector. The legendary Hotel Imperial opened its doors in 1873. Just like the Palais Hansen Kempinski on the Schottenring, which was turned back into a hotel again ten years ago. The period around 1873 is considered to represent the birth of city tourism as we know it. Vienna also celebrates this in 2023 and takes a peek behind the scenes of these special buildings. In line with the motto "Visions and New Beginnings", the current boom in Vienna's hotel sector will also be a focal point in 2023. Exciting new hotel projects will show what the future of the hotel industry looks like. And what would Vienna be without music? The Strauss dynasty played an important musical role in the World's Fair in the form of Johann Strauss II. Not only because of the grand performances that were given at the World's Fair and in establishments like Casino Zögernitz. Johann Strauss wrote compositions for the occasion like the "Rotunde Quadrille". A special new Viennese music venue opens in anniversary year 2023 with the "House of Strauss" in the historic Casino Zögernitz. The venue will offer a museum dedicated to the Strauss dynasty, as well as concerts, events, and a brasserie.

World-class dining

Attention will also be focused on Vienna's food scene in 2023. Café Landtmann, one of the best known of Vienna's Ringstrasse cafés, is also celebrating its 150th birthday. Indulgence in the spirit of the World's Fair is provided by the Imperial and Royal Court Confectioner Gerstner, which in 1873 was responsible for the imperial catering at the World's Fair, and still delivers culinary superlatives today. Yet, in particular, the World's Fair lent Viennese gastronomy a proper portion of internationalism. That remains the case today "Visions and New Beginnings" therefore celebrates Vienna's contemporary food scene and takes a look inside the best restaurants with the widest range of world cuisines, from Italian to Japanese.

Austro-Japanese friendship

Talking of Japan: For no other country was the Vienna World's Fair of greater importance. Because Japan presented itself to the world in grand style for the first time in Vienna. Why? Because the country had only recently changed its geopolitical strategy and opened itself up to the world. The Vienna World's Fair marked the beginning of Japan's industrialization. Which is why "Visions and New Beginnings" is also in the spirit of Japanese Vienna. From Japanese gardens to Japanese cuisine to special places like the Weltmuseum Wien (World Museum Vienna), where fantastic World's Fair objects with a reference to Japan await. This special relationship led to a long forgotten curiosity: During the World's Fair, Japan presented the western world with the soya bean for the very first time. In 1873, Vienna was the hub from which soya was spread around the world. Initial attempts at cultivation happened at Schönborn Garden Palace of all places, where the Austrian Museum of Folk Life and Folk Art is located today. Special activities related to the soya bean will be waiting here in 2023.

Meeting destination since 1873

The World's Fair as well as soya will also play an important role for Meeting Destination Vienna in 2023. As one of the leading congress and meeting cities, the International Congress of Soya Beans will be held at the Austria Center Vienna (ACV) from June 18 to 23, 2023. Messe Wien, one of the most important places of Meeting Destination Vienna, is also directly related to the 1873 World's Fair. It is located right on the site of the World's Fair. This area, where two architecturally outstanding new districts arose with the campus of the Vienna University of Economics and Business and Viertel Zwei, will be presented. The Vienna World's Fair 1873 was the first World's Fair with an extensive congress program. Even in those days, Vienna was a leader in the field of medical congresses.

The invention of the quality of life

And above all the famous Viennese water is to be celebrated in 2023. Because the first Viennese high-source pipeline entered into use on October 24, 1873, and has supplied Vienna with crystal-clear spring water from the Alps ever since. A sustainable investment that is a special feature for a large city and contributes a great deal to the high quality of life in Vienna. In 2022, Vienna was voted the city with the world's highest quality of life for the third time by Britain's Economist Magazine. The high-source pipeline wasn't the only thing that looked far into the future. In the early 1870s, speculators wanted to cut down large tracts of the Vienna Woods for profit. That didn't happen because the first media environmental campaign in Austria prevented the project from getting off the ground. The Vienna Woods were saved and are today one of Vienna's most important local recreation areas. With around 50 percent of green space, Vienna is considered to be one of the greenest large cities there is. That is another reason to celebrate Vienna's past, present, and future in 2023 under the banner of great urban visions.

Facts and figures on the Vienna World's Fair 1873

- 53,000 exhibitors
- May 1: The World's Fair was opened at the beginning of May and ran until November 2, 1873
- 35 participating countries
- 194 pavilions in various national styles
- 40 day trips would have been needed to view all the pavilions
- 108 meters: The diameter of the dome of the rotunda – the largest dome in the world at the time.
- 8,000 square meters of exhibition space in the rotunda
- 800 meters: That was the length of the machinery hall that ran right through the exhibition site and offered 40,000 square meters of exhibition space.
- 16 specialist congresses: Part of the World's Fair was also an extensive program of congresses, including in the field of medicine
- 25,572 medals were awarded in various categories:
 - 8,687 handed out “for merit”
 - 2,929 progress medals
 - 2,162 medals for employees
 - 977 for art
 - 310 for good taste
- 116,342 square meters: The total amount of space given over to the topics of Industry, Agriculture, and Culture. The exhibition was subdivided into 26 groups and 174 sections
- 5,000 workers were involved in constructing the buildings.
- 14.8 million guilders deficit: The World's Fair was not an economic success, but gave Vienna's development a boost like no other major event. Instead of 15 million visitors, 7.25 million came. The reason was a cholera outbreak that killed 3,000 people